

*July 2, 2008*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-LA) announced today that the Houma Regional Arts Council was awarded a matching grant of \$13,000 to organize a Big Read program. The National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) created the Big Read program in 2006 as a way to encourage Americans to discover the joy of reading great literature. *July 2, 2008*

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**"Creating a love for great literature is fundamental to improving education in our south Louisiana communities," said Rep. Melancon. "This federal grant to the Houma Regional Arts Council will support literacy and the arts for people of all ages in the Houma/Terrebonne area, and I am pleased to announce it."**

The Big Read grant will enable the Houma Regional Arts Council to engage the entire community in reading and discussing the classic work of fiction *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. In addition, the NEA will provide participating organizations like the Houma Regional Arts Council with free support materials including reader's guides for students and community participants, teacher's guides, audio introductions to the book, as well as a comprehensive website.

NEA's Big Read is the largest reading program in the United States. Since the program began in 2006, the NEA has awarded more than 530 Big Read grants and engaged more than 2,000 communities across the United States. The Houma Regional Arts Council was among 208 organizations nationwide that will receive Big Read grants between September 2008 and June 2009.

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